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DEPT FOR EAP/MTS, EAP/PD, R, IIP/IR, ECA
NSC FOR P. RAMAMURTHY

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SUBJECT: ENGAGING INDONESIAN YOUTH - NSC RAMAMURTHY
DISCUSSES CAIRO VISION

¶1. (SBU) Summary: NSC Senior Director for Global Engagement Pradeep Ramamurthy met with a wide cross-section of Indonesian youth, in addition to meetings with government officials and civil society and business interlocutors during his January 24-29 visit to Indonesia. Ramamurthy shared with audiences President Obama's vision for broadened engagement between the United States and Muslim-majority countries as articulated in the President's "New Beginnings" speech in Cairo and also briefed on the Interfaith Dialogue held January 25-27 in Jakarta. Indonesian youth interlocutors warmly welcomed President Obama's Cairo vision and expressed appreciation for the offer of more comprehensive engagement. Indonesian youth told Ramamurthy they were eager for increased two-way exchange opportunities. Keenly interested in how U.S.-Indonesian relations are developing, the students voiced foreign policy concerns ranging from the pace of the Middle East peace process, the Iran/nuclear issue, and U.S. engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan. End summary.

Students Seek More Engagement, Especially Two-Way Exchanges
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¶2. (U) In meetings with a cross-section of Indonesian students -- from a pesantren (Islamic boarding school) and a leading university (Gadjah Mada at the American Corner) in Yogyakarta to a small Islamic university (Prof. Drs. Moestopo Islamic University) and leaders of religious youth organizations in Jakarta -- students welcomed President Obama's vision for more comprehensive engagement with Muslim-majority countries. Students expressed a strong desire for additional two-way exchange opportunities and eagerness for increased engagement with Americans via such exchanges. They said they want to improve English language skills and to build mutual understanding between the two countries. They said they were also interested in working with Americans on a variety of cooperative activities (including in the areas of trade and investment and science and technology) as they aspire to help Indonesia become a developed country.

Indonesian Culture, Identity and Foreign Policy Concerns
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¶3. (U) Students expressed strong points of view. They told Ramamurthy that Indonesia was not part of the Arab world. They also advised that Indonesians practice Islam in accordance with their culture of tolerance and diversity. They expressed deep concern that the media too often portrays Muslims as terrorists. They said those depictions were hurtful and they want to be part of a conversation that corrects those perceptions. They also noted that it is Indonesian youth who drive change.

¶4. (U) Students were curious about U.S.-Indonesian relations and asked Ramamurthy about how the U.S. views Indonesia. They voiced a wide-range of foreign policy concerns, including the pace of the

Middle East peace process, tensions over the Iran/nuclear issue, and U.S. engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan. They also expressed worries about regional issues, including tensions between Indonesia and Malaysia and nervousness about Indonesia's ability to compete with the entry into force of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement.

¶5. (SBU) Students at all four events left with a better appreciation for the importance of the US-Indonesia bilateral relationship, the Administration's emphasis on comprehensive engagement (on cultivating partnerships in a broad range of areas like education, health, science, and economic opportunity, as well as security), and the U.S. government's commitment to listening to and developing relationships with people - especially youth. Ramamurthy also helped address concerns and misperceptions about American attitudes towards Islam and Islam in America. At Moestopo, he was aided in this by Indonesian students who recently returned from high-school exchanges to the United States, which further reinforced the value of exchange programs in cultivating mutual understanding.

New Media and Indonesia's Blogger Community
Are Force for Change
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¶6. (SBU) A group of Indonesia's leading new media voices, representing Indonesia's vibrant blogger community, told Ramamurthy new media is a growing force for social change and a new source of information, particularly for Indonesian youth. They highlighted their commitment to media freedom and described initiatives launched and supported by new media, including campaigns in support of free speech and anti-corruption efforts. The bloggers were appreciative of the Embassy's efforts to encourage freedom of expression and to support initiatives, such as the annual "Pesta Blogger" national gathering in Jakarta and workshops to help train Indonesian

bloggers.

¶7. (U) Mr. Ramamurthy cleared on this message.

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